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Joint written statement* submitted by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status; the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Arab Lawyers Union, Arab Organization for Human Rights, General Arab Women Federation, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development - VIDES, Nord-Sud XXI - North-South XXI, Organisation Mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale, Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Cooperation Economique Internationale - OCAPROCE Internationale, Union of Arab Jurists, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status; Indian Council of South America (CISA), International Educational Development, Inc., International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM), World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Alarming rates of birth defects, cancers and infant mortality in Fallujah-Iraq*

The fundamental right of health mentioned in the constitution of the WHO, is also reflected in the articles 6 and 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Under article 6 of the CRC the member States shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Under article 24 of the convention, States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to the highest attainable standard of health care services; they shall take the appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality; to ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care; to ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers; States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international cooperation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

For two decades, the iraqi population has been subjected to grave human rights violations, caused by war, foreign occupation and international sanctions. Iraq is suffering from a high toxic level of lead, mercury contamination and depleted uranium pollution in many regions, which led to indirect killings. About 1200 tonnes of ammunition were dropped on Iraq during the wars of 1991 and 2003. As a result, contamination occurred in more than 350 sites in Iraq[1].

Fallujah has been submitted to the most intense urban combat operations in Iraq with a concentrated use of novel weapons in 2004. Although American forces later admitted that they had used white phosphorus shells, they never admitted to using depleted uranium, which has been linked to high rates of cancer and birth defects[2,5]. Furthermore, several studies show a high level of contamination by other toxic substances including Uranium[4] lead and mercury[3,4,5].

An upsetting number has been reported of birth defects ranging from congenital heart defects to brain dysfunctions and malformed limbs [5]. There are also a huge number of miscarriages and cancer cases. According to gynaecologists, paediatricians and neurologists in Fallujah the numbers of these cases have been increasing rapidly since 2005[6]. More disturbingly, they appear to be occurring at an increasing rate in children born in Fallujah. Similar defects have been found among children born in Basra after British troops invaded, according to the new research[7].

Birth Defects

A study published in 2013 finds a rate of congenital anomalies at birth in Fallujah to be 11.5 times higher than the comparable rate in neighbouring Kuwait. The study concludes that the level of congenital anomaly in Fallujah is

[1] Fathi, R. A., Matti, L. Y., Al-Salih, H. S., & Godbold, D. (2013). Environmental pollution by depleted uranium in Iraq with special reference to Mosul and possible effects on cancer and birth defect rates. *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, *29*(1), 7–25.
[2] The Independent, *Iraq records huge rise in birth record*, http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and- families/health-news/iraq-records-huge-rise-in-birth-defects-8210444.html
[3] Al-Sabbak, M., Sadik Ali, S., Savabi, O., Savabi, G., Dastgiri, S., & Savabieasfahani, M. (2012). Metal contamination and the epidemic of congenital birth defects in Iraqi cities. *Bulletin of environmental contamination and toxicology*, *89*(5), 937–44.
[4] Alaani, S., Tafash, M., Busby, C., Hamdan, M., & Blaurock-Busch, E. (2011). Uranium and other contaminants in hair from the parents of children with congenital anomalies in Fallujah, Iraq. *Conflict and health*, *5*, 15.
[5] Alaani, S., Al-Fallouji, M. a R., Busby, C., & Hamdan, M. (2012). Pilot study of congenital anomaly rates at birth in fallujah, iraq, 2010. *The Journal of IMA / Islamic Medical Association of North America*, *44*(1), 1–7.
[6] Humanitarian Disaster In Fallujah: Unprecedented Numbers of Birth Defects, Miscarriages and Cancer Cases http://www.globalresearch.ca/humanitarian-disaster-in-fallujah-unprecedented-numbers-of-birth-defects- miscarriages-and-cancer-cases/18646
[7] The Independent, *Iraq records huge rise in birth defect*, op.cit., http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/iraq-records-huge-rise-in-birth-defects-8210444.html

unusually high and is caused by the exposure of the population to some genetic mutagen employed during the USA attacks on the city in 2004[8].

This prospective study begun at the start of 2010, each case of congenital anomaly was examined at birth at one of three clinics at Fallujah General Hospital together with details of the type of malformation and parental information on possible causes[9]. There were 291 congenital anomaly cases registered at birth in the eleven-month period at the study's clinic. The total number of births recorded in the hospital over the period was 6015. The congenital anomaly included 113 heart and circulatory system cases, 72 nervous system cases, 40 digestive system cases, 30 down syndrome cases, 9 genitourinary cases, 6 ear, face and neck cases and 7 respiratory cases [10].

There is an important correlation between heavy metals contaminations and birth defects. The most common abnormalities in Fallujah children are congenital heart defects, neural tube defects, and cleft lip/palate. Another study of 56 families in Fallujah, and a metal analysis of hair samples from them, shows public contamination with two well-known neurotoxic metals, lead and Mercury: Two toxic metals readily used in the manufacture of present-day ammunition. Hair metal data from Fallujah showed lead to be five times higher in the hair samples of children with birth defects compared to children who appeared normal. Mercury was six times higher[11] [12].

In Fallujah's hospital, Dr Samira Alaani indicates that parents of children with congenital anomalies show unusually high levels of contamination by other chemical elements. These include Iron, Aluminium, Manganese, Strontium, Barium, and Bismuth. There are also high levels of contamination with elements that are derived from destroyed concrete and masonry, namely Calcium and Magnesium. Although, not only Depleted Uranium has been found, experts found enriched Uranium exposure to be also a cause of the congenital anomaly and cancer increases[13].

Cancers

In Fallujah a dramatic increase of cancer and paediatric cancer rate is reported since the USA army attacks in 2004. Researchers found an association between exposure to DU radiation and the rising incidence of malignancies among children as well as cancer[14].

A study on the incidence of cancer in the city, published in 2012, reports an important variation of the incidence rate of cancer in the different areas of Fallujah region. Accordingly, the high incidence in Fallujah Centre reflects the consequence of the USA army attacks on the city. The range of incidence rate is from (50-128 cases per 100,000)[15].

Researchers found in 2010 a fourfold increase of the cancer rate since 2004. Forms of cancer are similar to those found among the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb survivors, who were exposed to intense radiation. Their study shows that the rate of leukaemia is 38 times higher, the childhood cancer rate is 12 times higher, and breast cancer is 10 times more common than in populations in Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait. Heightened levels of adult lymphoma and brain

[8] Alaani, S., (2012) op.cit., Pilot study of congenital anomaly rates at birth in fallujah, iraq, 2010. *The Journal of IMA / Islamic Medical Association of North America*, *44*(1), 1–7.
[9] e.g. consanguinity, smoking, drugs during pregnancy, age of mother etc.
[10] Ibidem.
[11] Al-Sabbak, (2012), op.cit. Metal contamination and the epidemic of congenital birth defects in Iraqi cities. *Bulletin of environmental contamination and toxicology*, *89*(5), 937–44.
[12] Fallujah mothers who participated in this study did not take any medication and described their diet as « good » during pregnancy. Only one couple was first cousins. Mothers did not drink or smoke during pregnancy. All families consumed water from local aqueducts or locally bottled waters. Siblings of the parents had no history of children with congenital defects. In addition, the study reports a chronological increase in the percentages of birth defects and miscarriages in these Fallujah families.
[13] Alaani Samira et al. (2011). Uranium and other contaminants in hair from the parents of children with congenital anomalies in, 1–15.
[14] Fathi, R. A., Matti, L. Y., Al-salih, S., & Godbold, D. (2013). Environmental pollution by depleted uranium in Iraq with special reference to Mosul and possible effects on cancer and birth defect rates, (February 2014), 37–41.
[15] Al-faluji, A. A. R., Ali, S. H., & Al-esawi, A. A. J. (2012). Incidence of cancer in Fallujah above 10 years age with over view of common cancers in 2011, *4*(9), 591–596.

tumors were also reported[16]. These results are consistent with the result of other studies, for instance Al-Faluji finds in 2011 an incidence of 96 per 100,000 for all cancer cases in Fallujah, which is about three folds higher than what has been registered at 2002 before Iraq invasion (34.5 per 100,000 population)[17].

Infant Mortality Rate

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is one of the most important indicators of health status and life quality. The rise of IMR is attributed to dissatisfied hygienic requirements; and unfavourable environmental factors, economical conditions, environmental sanitation and medical care[18].

Researchers found IMR in Fallujah during 2010 and 2011 to be (49.5/1000 live births & 48.27/1000 live births successively)[19]. It is high compared to that of other areas in Iraq and Iraq neighbour countries: Kuwait (7.87 deaths/1000 live births), Iran (41.11/1000 live births), Syria (15.12 deaths/1000 live births), Turkey (23.07 deaths/1000 live births), Jordan (15.83 deaths/1000 live births), and Saudi Arabia (15.61 deaths/1000 live births)[20].

Thus, IMR is disturbingly high in Fallujah. This high rate reflects the bad social, health and economic services in the city in addition to the security situation. According to this study, most of the infant deaths occurred in the neonatal period, which indicates the urgent need to improve the health services[21]. Another important problem appears. In normal populations, 1050 boys are born for every 1000 girls. But among those born in Fallujah in the four years after the US assault, the ratio was reduced to 860 boys for every 1000 female births according to the researchers it is an impact of a major mutagenic event, likely the use of depleted uranium[22] [23].

Distortion of Evidence

According to Professor Souad Al-Azzawi, (an Iraqi Professor in Environmental Science) in 2013, the Ministry of Health, tried to put an end to two decades of research on the disturbing rate of birth defects in Iraq, not through epidemiological studies or measurements, but through conducting a simplistic survey released by the Iraqi Government on congenital birth defects in areas where US-led coalition forces used toxin-laced munitions. The summary report of this survey solved the crisis simply by denying such a problem exists[24].

The WHO has not taken steps to improve the health situation of the city of Fallujah. Moreover, the WHO officials have stepped in to defend the study of the Ministry of Health. Authors of the survey found "No clear evidence to suggest an unusually high rate of congenital birth defects in Iraq"[25]. The major objective of the study is to deny the findings of all previous research and articles.

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[16] US War Crimes: Cancer Rate in Fallujah Worse than Hiroshima http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-war-crimes-cancer-rate-in-fallujah-worse-than-hiroshima/20241

[17] Al-faluji, A. A. R., Ali, S. H., & Al-esawi, A. A. J. (2012). Incidence of cancer in Fallujah above 10 years age with over view of common cancers in 2011, *4*(9), 591–596.

[18] Abdulghani, S. T., Hameed, A. A., & Alfayadh, Z. T. (2013). Causes and Differentials of Infant Mortality in the Pediatrics Wards in Fallujah General Hospital, *3*(4), 1178–1186.

[19] More than eighty percent of mortality occurred in the neonatal period, male mortality was higher than female. About 91 percent of infants died during the year 2010 have normal body weight while most of those died during the year 2011 (41.4%) were underweighted. Most of the infants died during the two years were not vaccinated (91.1% & 89.1% respectively).

[20] Abdulghani, S. T., Hameed, op.cit.

[21] Ibidem

[22] The independent, Toxic legacy of US assault on Fallujah 'worse than Hiroshima' http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/toxic-legacy-of-us-assault-on-fallujah-worse-than-hiroshima-2034065.html

[23] This distortion is similar to gender ratios found in Hiroshima after the US atomic attack of 1945.

[24] Al-Azzawi, Souad, http://www.globalresearch.ca/congenital-birth-defects-in-iraq-concealing-war-crimes-against-iraqi-children-twisting-and-distorting-the-evidence/5353667

[25] *Summary of the Prevalence of reported Congenital Birth Defects in 18 Selected Districts in Iraq* http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/iraq/documents/Congenital_birth_defects_report.pdf

The study has been severely criticised. The Lancet reports that even WHO's expert reviewers raised methodological concerns about it, its main "limitation is that it is largely based on what people reported, without any medical examination"[26]. At the FAfO Foundation in Oslo, social anthropologist John Pedersen adds that the study's limited geographical scope sharply reduces its relevance in understanding the national pattern and prevalence of birth defects in Iraq[27]. In addition, as mentioned before, experts found a substantial variation of the incidence rate of cancer even within the city of Fallujah, and several studies from Iraq reported worrying rates of congenital birth defects in areas where British, United States, and other coalition forces used highly toxic munitions[28]. At the same time, experts and authors are facing difficulties to express themselves freely on the subject, and are being persecuted. For instance, the study mentioned before on congenital anomaly at birth in Fallujah[29] has been difficult to get published[30].

Dysfunctional Institutions

In addition to the toxic environment, the Iraqi institutions that should ensure protection for women and children are dysfunctional and unreliable. As a result, the most vulnerable are exposed to a higher mortality risk. According to Dr Omar Al-Kubaisy (a prominent Iraqi cardiologist), the part of the State budget allocated to health, medical care, and education is insufficient. Indeed, this part does not exceed two or three percent of the total budget[31].

Moreover, there is a significant disregard of first aid services, primary health care services, and health prevention, including maternity centres and immunisation programs for children. The health problems at birth are increased because of the financial and administrative corruption in the Ministry of Health and the dependence on non-professional cadres that relies on sectarian affiliation and exclusion from medical care. In addition, there is a persistent intentional killing and forced migration of doctors and healthcare personnel. Dr Omar Al-Kubaisy underlines that the breakdown and the continued deterioration of health infrastructure and services such as providing clean water and electricity in hospitals, the loss of control on pharmaceutical industry, conducted to a disastrous situation, that has already been reported in earlier studies[32], and remains today [33].

In another hand, there is an attempt to dissimulate the results of international studies, which demonstrate a relationship with the dramatic increasing cases of cancers, malformations and infertility and the use of prohibited lethal weapons, heavy metals and environmental pollution[34].

Recommendations

In order to ensure a reasonable level of healthcare, the international community and the Iraqi authorities should:

- Ensure an environmental clean-up, undertaken and financed by those responsible for the use of depleted

[26] Simon Cousens, reported by The Lancet, questions raised over Iraq congenital birth defect study http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)61812-7/fulltext
[27] The Lancet, Ibidem
[28] Ibidem
[29] Alaani, S., Al-Fallouji, M. a R., Busby, C., & Hamdan, M. (2012). Pilot study of congenital anomaly rates at birth in fallujah, iraq, 2010. *The Journal of IMA / Islamic Medical Association of North America*,
[30] Christopher Busby in a press release says "The World Health Organisation contacted me last year following our initial report, and my presentation at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Their representative asked me to collaborate on a study in Iraq, both of Fallujah and in other parts of the country, and I agreed. But after I told them I had to be closely connected with the data collection so I could be sure of the results, I heard no more. The present paper was sent to four different journals, and all refused to publish it, in one case even refused to look at it. The authors have been subject to continuous attacks on their credibility. If independent science dies, through threats, funding cuts and fear, then there is no hope for the human race. Scientific truth will be controlled by political power. The Islamic Doctors in the USA are to be congratulated for their brave decision to publish this important study."
[31] Dr Omar Al-Kubaisy http://www.dhiqar.net/Art.php?id=33500
[32] The huffingtonpost, Iraq War Anniversary: Birth Defects And Cancer Rates At Devastating High In Basra And Fallujah http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/20/iraq-war-anniversary-birth-defects-cancer_n_2917701.html
[33] Dr Omar Al-Kubaisy, http://www.dhiqar.net/Art.php?id=33500
[34] Ibidem

uranium and other toxic agents that are susceptible to the worrying increase of cancer and birth defects.

- The Iraqi health system must be restored to pre-invasion levels, which used to be one of the best in the region according to the WHO.
- Improve pregnancy care; by developing maternity centres quality and ensuring appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care to anticipate birth defects.
- Encourage researchers to have clear data and knowledge on the extent of birth defects, cancers and infant mortality, in order to take the necessary measures to provide adequate health services.
- Take measures to increase the level of family awareness, improve immunisation programs for children and enforcing family planning to achieve a substantial reduction of the IMR.
- Ensure that all human rights violations in Iraq during the sanction and the invasion and occupation be investigated by an international independent body, and appoint a Special Rapporteur for Iraq.

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* BRussels Tribunal, Arab Lawyers Association- UK, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), The International League of Iraqi Academics (ILIA), The Iraqi Commission on Human Rights (ICHR), Women Will Association (WWA), Organization for Widows and Orphans (OWO), Ikraam Center for Human Rights, Belgian Peace Movement, Ligue camerounaise des droits de l'homme, Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq (MHRI), Women Solidarity for an Independent and Unified Iraq, Alliance to Renew Co-operation among Humankind, International Coalition against War Criminals (ICAWC), Medical Aid for the Third World, Association of Iraqi Diplomats (AID), The African Association of Human Rights (AAHR), Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World, Moroccan Association for the Right to a Fair Trial, Americans Against the War (France), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), The International Action Center (IAC), American Worker, Association of Iraqi Intellectuals and Academics, The International Network of Arab Human Rights NGOs, America In Solidarity, Federacion De Mujeres Cubanas, Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons, International Anti-Occupation Network (IAON), International Lawyers.org, International Society of Iraqi Scientists, The Perdana Global Peace Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War, Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for Iraq Sovereignty- CEOSI, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, El Taller International, World Courts of Women, Center for Development Studies- India, Wariscrime.org, Action Center for Justice, 1% A Peace Army.org, A Bigger Tent.org, Agir contre la guerre (France), American Voices Abroad (Berlin, Germany), American Voices Abroad Military Project (Europe), Anti War Fair, Arizona Christian Peacemakers, Armbands for Peace, Arms Against War, Artists Against the War, Backbone Campaign, Be the Change, Become Active, Bike for Peace (Germany), Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Bird Dogger Org., Children of Iraq Association (UK),Bloomington Peace Action Coalition (IN), Blue State News Only, Boston Mobilization, Bring Democracy Back, Bring Them Home,Butterfly Gardeners Association, Citizens for Accountability on Iraq, California for Democracy, Camp Casey Blog, Camp U.S. Strike for Peace Campaign, Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran, Canada Watch, Carolina Peace Resource Center (SC), Cartoon Free America, Catalysts of Hope, Central Colorado Coalition on the Iraq War, Chester County Peace Movement (PA), Cindy Sheehan Org., Cities for Peace, Citizens for Legitimate Government, Citizens for Peace & Justice, Human Rights for all-Morocco, Christian Clergy For Impeachment.com, Clothing of the American Mind, Coalition Against Election Fraud, Coalition for Impeachment Now (COIN), Code Pink, the Iraqi Association for Human Rights (IAHR), Al-Basa'er Media Association, Consumers for Peace.org, Dhafir Trial.org, DC Anti-War Network.org, Democracy Action, Democracy for America Meetup (Birmingham, AL), Olympia Citizens' Movement to Impeach Bush/Cheney (WA), One Million Reasons, Operation Cease Fire, Operation Impeachment, Orange County Grassroots (CA), Out of Iraq, Out of Iraq Bloggers Caucus, Patrick Henry Democratic Club, Patriotic Pulse, Patriots for Gore, Peace Action, Peace Action Wisconsin, Peace and Accountability, Peace Drum, Peace Majority, Peace Movement Aotearoa (New Zealand), Peace Reso.org, Peninsula Peace and Justice Center (Palo Alto, CA), People's Campaign for the Constitution, People Powered Impeachment, People's Email Network, People's Glorious Five Year Plan, Picnic to Impeach, Pixel4Peace.org, Playing in Traffic, PledgeToImpeach.org, Political Cooperative, Politics and Art, Progressive Action Alliance, Progressive Action Center, Progressive Avenues, Progressive Democrats of America, Progressive Democrats of Hawaii Project Filibuster, Project for the OLD American Century, Refusing to Kill.org, Rescue Our Democracy, Sacramento for Democracy (CA), St Pete for Peace (FL), Sampsonia Way, San Diego for Democracy, School of the Americas Watch, Sheehan for Congress, South Florida Impeachment Coalition, South Mountain Peace Action (Maplewood & South Orange, NJ), Springs Action Alliance (CO), Stop the War Coalition (UK), Students for Impeachment, Students Towards a New Direction (STAND), Summit County Progressive Democrats (OH), The Known UnKnowns, The Politically Incorrect Cabaret,

The Rational Response Squad, Think Blue Dems, Time for Accountability, Toronto Coalition to Stop the War (Canada), Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International, True Blue Liberal.org, Trumansburg Impeachment (NY), Truth Empowered, Truthtelling Project, UC Nuclear, Underground Action Alliance, Unitarian Universalist Peace and Justice Group (Nantucket, MA), United Blue USA, United for Veterans (Wayne, MI), United Progressives, Upbeat Defiance, US Peace Memorial, US Tour of Duty: Iraq Veterans and Military Families Demand the Truth, Velvet Revolution, Vet Gulf March, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27, Virginia Grassroots Coalition, Voters for Peace, We the People for Peace, We the People Network, We the People Now, We The People United Bangladesh.org, Peace Surge, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (WA), Stop the War (UK), U.S. Peace Council, World Can't Wait.org, World Prout Assembly, Komite Internazionalista- Basque, Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional, Arab Cause Solidarity Committee, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Málaga, Spain, Stop Fascism Action Network, The Asian Jurists Centre, Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRDI), The African Center for Human Rights (ACHR), Veterans for Peace, Your Declaration of Independence.org , Arab Lawyers Network-UK, Conservative Centre of Environmental & Reserves in Fallujah (CCERF), Willie Nelson Peace Research Institute, Studies Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, Association internationale des droits de l'homme, NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement. NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.